

Lutheran Observer.

Unless with proofs of Holy Writ, or with manifest, clear and distinct principles and arguments, I am refuted and convinced, I can and will recant nothing.—Luther.

In Essentials, Unity; in Non-Essentials, Liberty; in all Things, Charity.

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Poetry.

AUTUMN.

BY ALICE CARY.

Shorter and shorter now the twilight slips
The days, as through the sunset gates they crowd,
And Summer from her golden collar slips
And strays through stubble-fields, and moans aloud.
Save when by fits the warmer air deceives,
And, stealing hopeful to some sheltered bower,
She lies on pillows of the yellow leaves,
And tries the old tunes over for an hour.
The wind, whose tender whisper in the May
Set all the young blooms listening through th' grove,
Sits rustling in the faded boughs to-day,
And makes his cold and unsuccessful love.
The rose has taken off her tire of red—
The mullein-stalk its yellow stars has lost,
And the proud meadow-pink hangs down her head
Against earth's chilly bosom, witch'd with frost.
The robin, that was busy all the June,
Before the sun had kissed the topmost bough,
Catching our hearts up in his golden tune,
Has given place to the brown cricket now.
The very cock crows lonesomely at morn—
Each flag and fern the shrinking stream divides—
Uneasy cattle low, and lambs forlorn
Creep to their strawy sheds with nettled sides.
Shut up the door: Who loves me must not look
Upon the withered world, but haste to bring
His lighted candle, and his story-book,
And live with me the poetry of Spring.

PASTIME.

BY CHRISTINA G. ROSSETTI.

A boat amid the ripples, drifting, rocking,
Two idle people, without pause or aim;
While in the ominous west there gathers darkness
Flush'd with flame.
A haycock in a hayfield backing, lapping,
Two drowsy people pillowed round about;
While in the ominous west across the darkness
Flame leaps out.
Better a wrecked life than a life so aimless,
Better a wrecked life than a life so soft;
The ominous west glooms thundering with its fire
Lit aloft.

NEVER IN VAIN.

BY SAMUEL LONGFELLOW.

I look to Thee in every need,
And never look in vain;
I feel Thy strong and tender love,
And all is well again:
The thought of Thee is mightier far
Than sin and pain and sorrow are.
Discouraged in the work of life,
Disheartened by its load,
Shamed by its failures or its fears
I sink beside the road,
But let me only think of Thee,
And then my heart springs up in me.

Contributions.

THE FUNDAMENTAL VIRTUE.

BY ROBERT E. SPEER.

There is nothing in Paul's Epistles more characteristic than his love of the homely and practical virtues. He is a theologian and a mystic. But we have not gone far with him in his doctrinal reasonings before he suddenly confronts us to demand whether the moral implications of his doctrine are finding expression in our lives. And though we may have gone up to the seventh heaven of spiritual ecstasy with him and forgotten that there is any matter-of-fact earth, he has not forgotten, for we are unexpectedly brought up with a round turn and asked whether we are now going to be more loving in our homes, more pure of heart, more diligent in service because of what we have seen. The apostle is set upon tying up the religious impulse, whether it comes from doctrine or from feeling, to our actual daily life and the kind of men and women we are in it.

And there is none of the virtues to which he always comes in his teaching on which he lays greater emphasis than simple fidelity. He says that all Christians are to be regarded as trustees or stewards, and that as such the supreme requirement is that they should be found faithful. When presenting a judgment of his own on a delicate moral question he commends it by saying, "I give my judgment as one that both obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful." In one of his letters to Timothy regarding the church administration, he urges as the crowning virtue of women that they should be "faithful in all things." And as to God himself, he rests at the last upon the solid confidence that however much vacillation and uncertainty life may hold, "God abideth faithful." More than a score of times in his letters he returns to dwell with earnestness upon this fundamental moral requirement.

There is something in this which begets a deep trust in Paul, himself. He has evidently so robust and trustworthy a moral nature. We feel about him all the air of a great integrity. And the presence of this atmosphere in his Epistles is a strong commendation of the letters themselves to our confidence. We find it difficult to believe that any of these letters, so full of a self-evidencing moral probity, and enthusiasm for righteousness could after all have been just cleverly concealed forgeries and that liars could have uttered such superb moral appeals, appeals stamped on the face of them with such glorious moral consistency.

Now this constant connection of religious thought and feeling with moral fidelity of character and action in Paul's Epistles is doubtless due in large part simply to the unconscious integrity of his own religious and moral nature. His whole life was a unity and he taught right conduct because his scheme of thought was a moral coherence and he was a right man. But on the other hand, it was also due to the fact that he consciously realized the peril of divorcing morality and re-

ligion, of being pious without being good, and was bent on eliminating any such suicidal influence from the Christian Church. This is no imaginary peril. The Pharisees succumbed to it. They were devout religionists and at the same time, as Jesus sternly told them, "children of Hell." And the danger into which they fell is as real in the case of our more advanced spiritual conceptions of religion as in the case of their formalism and ceremonial sham. Indeed, it may be said to be greater because the evil and harm of it are so much more awful. We may be using the vocabulary of the higher spiritual life and by the unfaithfulness of our experience and conduct to these spiritual standards be perpetrating the very moral horror against which Paul's soul rebelled and to which he addresses himself in some form in almost every one of his Epistles.

It is on this account that he steadily presses into the foreground the absolute requirement of faithfulness. He wings this conception over the entire life. The Christian principles which we hold, he maintains, must be given a clean sweep across everything. He begins with the body. That is a trust and must be conceived as a temple of the Holy Ghost, not to be trifled with, much less to be morally misused, and he works out from this some grave lessons for the Corinthian church. And the principles applicable in our bodies run over and through our entire life. All that we have, we have in trust as stewards, and the first essential characteristic of stewards is fidelity. Here the most distant doctrine, the most exalted rhapsody finds foothold on the earth. Does it make us more honest men, more patient, more kind, more faithful?

Here is the real testing of life. The significant infidelity is moral rather than intellectual. The intellectual fidelity or infidelity is significant just in proportion as it is moral. The man who is a perfectly faithful man in his moral life will become a faithful man in his intellectual life. Jesus said he would. "If any man do his will he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." No man can be a perfectly moral, faithful man who has not the stimulus and standard of the truth, but he will not find the truth without a faithful heart, or lovingly hold it when he has found it.

One recognizes in our own rough daily judgments that fidelity is the discriminating test of men. We are told that so-and-so has made a certain statement. That gives the statement a significance of value to us. But so-and-so also made it. That quite alters the matter. He is a faithful man and his own trustworthiness covers all that issues from him. It is what we seek in servants, simple fidelity in all quiet and unostentatious duty. And it is what we crave in friends. "Give us a man," said Dean Stanley, "young or old, high or low, on whom we can thoroughly depend, who will stand firm when others fail; the friend, faithful and true; the adviser, honest and fearless; the adversary, just and chivalrous; in such a one there is a fragment of the Rock of Ages." For as Paul joyfully realized, fidelity is the very nature and characteristic of God. Whatever else changes, he changes not. He abides faithful because it is his own being. He cannot deny himself.

Love, says Paul, is a greater thing than faith or hope, but love in this sense is simply fidelity, the realization in life of the faithfulness of God. We are accustomed to think that life is the great thing and many of our theologians and moralists teach that while theoretically truth is supreme, yet in a crisis it may be sacrificed for life. But Paul's doctrine is that fidelity, which is simply veracity in action, is sovereign over life. And this is Christ's doctrine, "Be thou faithful unto death and I shall give thee a crown of life." That was the closing verse in a small Christian tract prepared for distribution to the Japanese soldiers going to Manchuria. A captain read it with delight. "That is the

religion for us," he said. A curate, whom the late Archbishop Temple proposed to send to a very difficult post was urged by his friends to decline, on the ground that he would not live two years in the strain and trial of it. He came to Temple, "Yes, it may be so," was the reply, "but you and I don't think of things like that, do we?"

Dying is a trifle, an incident in the temporary episode of life, but fidelity is no trifle. It is an anchorage in the eternal moral integrity of God. To betray it for the sake of life or any other bauble is to trade glass for diamond; to build hay, whose end is fire instead of gold, which is to be tried and to endure.

This conception of what after all is the greatest thing in life dignifies our common ways. It brings the heroic within the reach of each one of us. If we can display the divine nature in our common living, then that glory is possible to everyone. And it is by taking advantage of this possibility of fidelity in the ordinary things of life that we shall come some day without knowing it to the glory of the divine character realized in life.

One prayed in vain to paint the vision blest,
That shone upon his heart by night and day.
But humble duties in his dwelling pressed
And hungry hearts that would not turn away,
And cares that still his eager hands bade stay.
The canvas never knew the pictured face.
But year by year, while yet the vision shone
An angel near him, wondering bent to trace
On his own life the Master's image grown
And unto men made known.

Is it fanciful to draw some such lesson from the significance of the succession of the names in the nineteenth chapter of Revelation? The one whom John saw then leading the armies of Heaven had on his garment and on his thigh a name written King of kings and Lord of lords. But before that he had another name. He wore a garment sprinkled with blood and his name was called the Word of God. But before that, he had yet another name. His eyes were clear and fearless as fire and he was called Faithful and True. First of all, Faithful and True, King of kings, Lord of lords, the Word of God—but only in his case, who was first of all, Faithful and True.

New York City.

RUTH AND DORA.

Dr. Van Dyke as Apologist.

BY PROF. W. H. WYNN, D. D.

Dr. Henry Van Dyke, in his address before the Pan-Presbyterian council at Liverpool, spoke on the relation of Christianity to current literature, and among other striking utterances we find this: "The book of Ruth is no more and no less Christian, to my mind, than Tennyson's *Dora*."

We quote this with no view to supercilious or finical criticism on what is essentially a rhetorical venture, in the direction of the liberalizing sentiment of our time, with regard to the inspiration and authority of our sacred books. The aim of the speaker was commendable on the whole, but there was some hazard in dressing it up loosely in flowing robes.

The Bible is literature, there can be no doubt of this, for all the great masters in the literary art are of one mind in putting this book on the very apex of our pyramid of books. But literature, as we understand the term, is aesthetics, and, by the consensus of the ages, these scriptural writings are something more—they are distinctly religious in their origin, and are profoundly religious in the entire scope and purpose of what they record. They contrast with all the other sacred books of the world in being *ex professo* monotheistic from the start, with the solitary exception of the Koran, which is known to be, at best, a rhapsodical